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Queering Time and Space: Mediated Desire in The Golden Bowl and Mrs. Dalloway

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Queering Time and Space: Mediated Desire in *The Golden Bowl* and *Mrs. Dalloway*

Undergraduate Honors Thesis

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University of Vermont

In partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of the

Bachelor of Arts

By

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I. Introduction

In *Tendencies*, Eve Sedgwick characterizes what she terms the “queer moment” as “inextinguishable” (xii). For Sedgwick, “queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*” (xii). Sedgwick traces the etymology of the word “queer,” saying, “the word ‘queer’ itself means across—it comes from the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*” and concluding of “queer,” “keenly, it is relational, and strange” (xii). Sedgwick’s theorizing forms the mainstay of my Honors thesis. My research has taken me abroad to England and has allowed me to begin tracing Girard’s theory of mimetic desire back to Freud’s Oedipal triangle and ahead to Sedgwick’s work in *Between Men* to offer a reading of three erotic triangles, two in *The Golden Bowl* and one in *Mrs. Dalloway*. I am arguing a point about the queer and vaguely incestuous elements of the Maggie-Charlotte-Amerigo, the Maggie-Charlotte-Adam, and the Clarissa-Doris-Elizabeth triangles through an appeal to their shared use of spatiotemporal metaphors and repetitions. The emphasis on repetition and cyclicity reflects Sedgwick’s theorizing on “queer time” and “eddying” and presents a way to suggest a heightened queerness embedded in the structure of the narratives. I will conclude by proposing that the authors bother to encode queer and incestuous possibilities, what Hugh Stevens calls “subliminal fantasies,” (Moon 433) especially in spatiotemporal echoes because incest and queerness are what Sedgwick terms “the unspeakable” (Sedgwick 94). Consequently, this codification is a way of giving voice to the unspeakable. That the argument I am making in reference to *Mrs. Dalloway* is much more accepted in the academic literature than is my

argument in reference to *The Golden Bowl* is a reflection of the socio-historical and literary progress made in the years following James's publication of *The Golden Bowl*.

II. Sedgwick Queers Girard

Girard begins by granting that most works of fiction feature characters with linear desires. In these cases, there is no mediator, and the relationships can be “portrayed by a simple straight line which joins the subject and the object” (2). In triangular desire, however, “the mediator is there, above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object” (Girard 2). Girard traces examples of erotic triangles through Cervantes, Flaubert, Stendhal, Proust and Dostoyevsky as each successive author draws the mediator and the subject closer together and heightens the triangular emotions— “anger, jealousy, and impotent hatred” (14). These emotions are present in all of the texts Girard examines because “there is only one metaphysical desire,” though the “particular desires which instantiate this primordial desire are of infinite variety” (83).

Girard groups romantic works into roughly two overarching categories: externally mediated texts and internally mediated texts. External mediation occurs “when the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of possibilities of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers” (Girard 9). Internal mediation occurs “when this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly” (Girard 9). Here distance may be literalized in the geographical proximity of the characters, but more often the distance spoken of is spiritual. I will concentrate on internal mediation, because the triangles I will be focusing on in the novels are all internally mediated. I hope to demonstrate that “it is in internal mediation that the profoundest meaning of the modern is found” (Girard 92).

In internal mediation, cases of imitation are less glaring to the reader than in cases of external mediation, but “the imitation is no less strict and literal” (Girard 10). Unlike the subject

of external mediation who proudly acknowledges his attempts to imitate his mediator, the subject of internal mediation tries fastidiously to hide his imitation. As the subject grows increasingly frustrated with the obstacle he has placed between himself and the object, he tries to “repudiate the bonds of mediation” (Girard 10). The subject “easily convinces himself that his desire is spontaneous” and is “deeply rooted in the object and in this object alone” so that he can nurture the fantasy that he desired the object before he became involved with the mediator (Girard 12). Despite the subject’s efforts to distance himself from the mediator, the mediator continues to grow more prestigious in the eyes of the subject. The subject becomes “convinced that the model considers himself too superior to accept him as a disciple,” and, thus, the subject is torn asunder by his competing feelings of reverence and malice for the mediator (Girard 10). The subject hates himself for secretly admiring the mediator he claims to hate (Girard 11). In this way, the subject disguises the mediator. The mediator appears more like an enemy than a model to be carefully emulated. With these elements of the Girardian framework established, I want to turn our attention to Sedgwick’s criticism of Girard’s theory of triangular desire.

According to Sedgwick in *Between Men*, “the triangles Girard traces are most often those in which two males are rivals for a female; it is the bond between males that he [Girard] most assiduously uncovers” (21). Despite the erotic tension Girard describes between the male rivals, “the index to Girard’s book gives only two citations for ‘homosexuality’ per se” (23). Sedgwick sees it as a strength of Girard’s theory that Girard does not depend on “what was...considered sexual—at any historical moment” (22). Even though Girard expresses interest in understanding “homosexuality from the standpoint of triangular desire,” by failing to label the erotic desire present in the male-male rivalries Girard commits himself to an account of symmetrical isosceles

erotic triangles, which claims to describe “a dialectic of power abstracted from either the male/female or the sexual/nonsexual dichotomies” (22). Because it is obvious that the “distribution of power according to these dichotomies is not and possibly cannot be symmetrical, the hidden symmetries that Girard’s triangle helps us discover will always in turn discover hidden obliquities” (22). Sedgwick believes that the way Girard’s triangle allows us to uncover “hidden obliquities” makes the erotic triangle a powerful tool for queer theory (22).

Sedgwick sees Girard’s theory stemming from the “wisdom of sexual folklore” and “the Oedipal triangle” (22). In the Oedipal triangle, a “young child...is attempting to situate itself with respect to a powerful father and a beloved mother” (22). Freud theorizes “homo- and heterosexual outcomes in adults to be the result of a complicated play of desire for and identification with the parent of each gender” (22). Girard and Freud both theorize the erotic triangle to be “symmetrical—in the sense that its structure would be relatively unaffected by the power difference that would be introduced by a change in the gender of one of the participants” (23). In criticism of Freud and Girard, who “treat erotic triangles under the Platonic light that perceives no discontinuity in the homosocial continuum” (24), Sedgwick argues that “the radically disrupted continuum, in our society, between sexual and nonsexual male bonds, as against the relatively smooth and palpable continuum of female homosocial desire—might be expected to alter the structure of erotic triangles in ways that depend on gender” (23).

Frustrated with Lévi-Strauss’s “celebratory treatment of this regulation of women” and his claim that “the normative man uses a woman ‘as a conduit of a relationship’ in which his true partner is a man,” Rubin argues, in Sedgwick’s paraphrase, that “patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women

as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men” (25-26). Seeming almost to anticipate Rubin, Girard writes, “[we] see that often women rise in our estimation only because of the dead weight of men with whom we have to compete for them, although we can hardly bear the thought of that competition; that counterpoise removed, the charm of the woman declines” (Girard, 48). Sedgwick believes Rubin, a prominent cultural anthropologist publishing in queer and gender studies, offers us “analytical tools for treating the erotic triangle not as an ahistorical, Platonic form, a deadly symmetry from which historical accidents of gender, language, class and power detract, but as a sensitive register precisely for delineating relationships of power and meaning and for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment” (27). Sedgwick’s reading of Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women” is essential to contextualizing the substitutive quality of the Girardian objects I will examine in *The Golden Bowl*. I am queering Rubin’s historical model by highlighting the ways in which men become “symbolic” and “exchangeable” for the “purpose of cementing the bonds” between women (26).

III. The Beast in the Golden Bowl

In *The Golden Bowl*, Maggie, Charlotte, and Amerigo function as a Girardian triangle, and this triangle, in conjunction with a second triangle, namely Maggie, Charlotte, and Adam, highlights a queer and vaguely incestuous relationship between Maggie and Charlotte, what Michael Moon might term a “subliminal fantasy” (Moon 433). The juxtaposition of the two triangles emphasizes the substitutive role of the object and insists, as Girard would, that the relationship between the subject and the internal mediator is the more intense. Maggie is the subject, and Charlotte is Maggie’s rival or mediator for the affections of both Amerigo and Adam, the objects. Let us bear in mind Moon’s phrase, “subliminal fantasy,” and grant, as Moon says of *The Wings of the Dove*, that in *The Golden Bowl* too “the heteroerotic thematic is fully, even perhaps excessively, narrativized; the...homoerotic one is only barely narrativized. Since it remains a largely underdeveloped, albeit highly charged, series of moments late in the text, the reader must necessarily depend more heavily on knowledge of its social and historical determinants in his or her effort to get at its meanings” (Moon 438). As we heed Moon’s advice, we should also “consider that each of the four principal performers (omitting the Assinghams for simplicity) engages simultaneously in relationships that are self-reflexive, paired, triangulated, and quadrilateral, we arrive at some twenty-eight relationships (many of them unrepresented, none of them irrelevant)” (Weinstein 253-4). I will argue in Philip Weinstein’s vein that while the homoerotic dimensions of Maggie and Charlotte’s relationship are underrepresented in the scholarly literature, they are not “irrelevant” (Weinstein 254).

As Hugh Stevens acknowledges in “Sexuality and the Aesthetic,” “Charlotte as ‘other woman’ is a problematic figure because she seems necessary to Maggie’s marriage (she

institutes the structure of mimetic desire that brings Maggie closer to her husband) yet needs to be banished so that the marriage may take on the aesthetic form of the bowl ‘without the crack’” (Stevens 64). I want to return to the second half of Stevens’s claim later on in this paper and focus now on Charlotte’s central and catalytic function in Maggie and Amerigo’s marriage. Thinking of Charlotte near the close of the novel, Maggie reflects to Amerigo, “I think that it isn’t as if we had wholly done with her. How can we not always think of her? It’s as if her unhappiness had been necessary for us—as if we had needed her, at her own cost, to build us up and start us” (James 579-580). Amerigo attempts to assure Maggie that Charlotte is “making her life,” but Maggie returns, “a little by the way then too, while she’s about it, she’s making ours” (James 582).

This is not the first time the reader catches a glimmer of Girardian relational dynamics or the first time a figure like Charlotte is framed as essential to Maggie and Amerigo’s marriage. Early on, it becomes apparent that

one of the most comfortable things between the husband and the wife
 meanwhile...was that she never admired him so much, or so found him
 heartbreakingly handsome, clever, irresistible, in the very degree in which he had
 originally and fatally dawned upon her, as when she saw other women reduced to
 the same passive pulp that had then begun, once for all, to constitute *her*
 substance. There was really nothing they had talked of more together with more
 intimate and familiar pleasantries than of the license and privilege of, the boundless
 happy margin, thus established for each: she going so far as to put it that, even
 should he some day get drunk and beat her, the spectacle of him with hated rivals

would, after no matter what extremity, always, for the sovereign charm of it, charm of it in itself and as the exhibition of him that most deeply moved her, suffice to bring her around. (James 146)

Maggie's sentiments expressed here herald emotional upheavals to come. Charlotte is the competitor who trips Maggie's possessive and voyeuristic trigger.

To qualify Maggie's "passive pulp" comment (James 146), Maggie's "substance," her identity, is not, despite the above quotation, a mere "passive pulp"; rather, "the novel shows her negotiating with the fantasy of passivity" (Stevens 63). In "The Princess," Maggie reveals herself to be an apt orchestrator of her relationships. Maggie takes pains to uncover Amerigo's affair with Charlotte, to regain full possession of her husband, and to keep Adam and Charlotte from becoming aware of the depth of her own perceptions and of her role as puppeteer. Like Maggie, Charlotte, far from being "passive pulp," is a change agent who actively pursues her own agenda, especially where Amerigo is concerned (James 146). Charlotte is practically recruited by Adam and Maggie to manage their social affairs, and it is Charlotte who imposes on Amerigo alone and unannounced and suggestively asks, "What else, my dear, what in the world else can we do" (James 243)? If anything, it is the male characters in the novel, Adam, Amerigo, and Bob, who perform passive roles. As Weinstein explains, "The men tend to watch from afar. 'Lying like gods,' semisupine, they assist 'at the recurrent, the predestined phenomenon...the doing by the woman' of the requisite work. Their value as the reward that justifies the women's struggle seems to go without saying" (Weinstein 245). Just because the men are passive does not mean that they are not masculine or virile. Consider Amerigo as a test case. Amerigo's notion of a "recompense to women...was more or less to make love to them...He liked in these days to mark

them off, the women to whom he hadn't made love: it represented—and that was what pleased in him in it—a different stage of existence from the time at which he liked to mark off the women to whom he had” (James 40). This passage illustrates some of Amerigo's hunkier qualities but, as sexually confident as Amerigo is, he also plays an almost entirely passive role in his own extramarital affair. Amerigo takes little responsibility for his relationship with Charlotte. The Prince feels indignant

Being thrust, systematically, with another woman, and a woman one happened, by the same token, exceedingly to like, and being so thrust that the theory of it seemed to publish one as idiotic or incapable—this was a predicament of which the dignity depended all on one's own handling. What was supremely grotesque in fact was the essential opposition of theories—as if a galantuomo, as if *he* at least constitutionally conceived galantuomini, could do anything *but* blush and to 'go about' at such a rate with such a person as Mrs. Verver in a state of childlike innocence, the state of our primitive parents before the Fall. (James 272)

Similarly, Amerigo waits for Charlotte to give away her intentions while they sit in the penny chairs in Hyde Park the day before his marriage to Maggie. It is Charlotte who plans the consummation of their adultery at an inn in Gloucester on their return trip from Matcham to London. Amerigo merely acquiesces.

Adopting Stevens's claim that Maggie negotiates a “fantasy of passivity” (63), I want to illustrate that Maggie's appreciation of “spectacle,” first addressed as the spectacle of Amerigo with hated rivals, persists throughout the novel (James 146). In the instances of spectatorship, Maggie deftly challenges her position as the voyee by functioning as a ringleader in her own

exhibitionist performances. Maggie likens herself to a circus performer (James 376), an improvising actress (James 348), and a successful playwright (James 497). Maggie concludes that

Fanny Assingham might really have been there...like one of the assistants in the ring at the circus, to keep up the pace of the sleek revolving animal on whose back the lady in short spangled skirts should brilliantly caper and posture...Maggie had forgotten, had neglected, had declined, to be the little Princess on anything like the scale open to her; but now that the collective hand had been held out to her with such alacrity, so that she might skip up into the light, even, as seemed to her modest mind, with such a show of pink stocking and such an abbreviation of white petticoat, she could strike herself as perceiving, under arched eyebrows, where her mistake had been. (James 376)

As Maggie fantasizes about being “the lady in short spangled skirts” capering and posturing on display and skipping “up into the light” that is rightfully hers as a Princess and an heiress, Maggie implicitly wedges Charlotte out of the limelight (James 376). In reference to a different example, Weinstein establishes that “The effect of [Maggie’s] performance—and one wonders if this is not also its motive—is to denature the subject-subject relationships between Charlotte and her husband, Charlotte and her lover” (252). If Maggie sees herself evicting Charlotte from center stage, then Maggie imagines invisibly inserting herself “within these potentially intimate pairings...to triangulate them in such a way that she and each of the men become the subjects, working together, while Charlotte becomes the object, worked against” (Weinstein 252). In her fantasy, Maggie dislodges Charlotte “With...a show of pink stocking and such an abbreviation of white petticoat” (James 376). The salaciousness of this description suggests Maggie’s mind is,

perhaps, not so “modest” (James 376). I will even hazard that the “sleek revolving animal” Maggie is riding is an avatar for Charlotte.

A triple threat entertainer, “Maggie...reminded herself of an actress who had been studying a part and rehearsing it, but who suddenly, on the stage, before the footlights, had begun to improvise, to speak lines not in the text. It was this very sense of the stage and the footlights that kept her up, made her rise higher” (James 348). Just as Maggie ascends “into the light” in the previous passage, Maggie is buoyed by the excitement of free-form exhibition and is able to “rise higher” (James 348). Again, it is Maggie’s glee at deftly manipulating the relationship between Charlotte and Adam that acts as a “platform...sensibly under her feet” (James 349).

Finally, peeking through the window at the bridge game, Maggie realizes the bridge players, Adam, Amerigo, Charlotte, and Fanny, might have been—really charming as they showed in the beautiful room, and Charlotte certainly, as always, magnificently handsome and supremely distinguished—they might have been figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author; they might even, for the happy appearance they continued to present, have been such figures as would by the strong note of character in each fill any author with the certitude of success, especially of their own histrionic. (James 497)

I will address the pivotal scene during the bridge game at length. For context, this playwright fantasy precedes Maggie’s most crucial and dramatic manipulation of Charlotte. Maggie promises Charlotte she has no ill will towards her and implicitly claims to suspect nothing of Charlotte’s affair with Maggie’s husband, Amerigo. Maggie hypes herself up with this fantasy of domination prior to her inevitable mano a mano confrontation with Charlotte. To understand

Maggie's compulsion to psyche herself up, it is helpful to see how Weinstein adopts the language of Maggie's theatrical metaphors to claim that "*The Golden Bowl* masterfully unfolds as a dizzying ballet of subjects who were once objects moving around objects who were once subjects" (244). Weinstein explains that "the surface of this dance yields great beauty, yet its lifeblood is the differential flow of power" (244). Maggie imagines herself possessing definitive creative power in anticipation of her exercise of social manipulative power.

After Maggie becomes privy to the affair between Amerigo and Charlotte, Maggie grows aware that Charlotte has "designs upon her of a nature best known to herself" and is "only waiting for the better opportunity of their finding themselves less companioned" (James 490-491). This awareness is "at the bottom of Maggie's wish to multiply their spectators" (James 491). Even later, after Maggie seems to have failed in her attempts to have spectators always present, after Charlotte has successfully cornered Maggie alone on the terrace and then gets her alone in the drawing room, she coerces Maggie into sealing her lie about her perception of Charlotte's relationship with Amerigo with a kiss just as the other members of the house party at Fawns come upon them, so that the audience Maggie so desires finally vindicates her. In the very moment Charlotte's kiss is imparted, Maggie is most excited by her voyeurs

while her cheek received the prodigious kiss, she had her opportunity—the sight of the others, who...had reached the open door at the end of the room and flagrantly stopped short in presence of the demonstration that awaited them. Her husband and her father were in front, and Charlotte's embrace of her—which wasn't to be distinguished for them either, she felt, from her embrace of Charlotte—took on with their arrival a high publicity. (James 509)

The height of the homoerotic tension between Maggie and Charlotte is enjoyed only in its relation to the voyeurs. Reciprocally, Maggie needs Charlotte to be interested in the presence of Adam and Amerigo.

Maggie is still reflecting on the exhibitionist quality of her kiss with Charlotte several chapters later. Tellingly, Maggie's memory of the kiss is triggered by her embrace with Adam. Maggie's incestuous embrace with her father leads to her reflection on her incestuous embrace with her stepmother. First, consider Maggie's interaction with Adam: Adam's "hands came out, and while her own took them he drew her to his breast and held her. He held her hard and kept her long, and she let herself go; but it was an embrace that, august and almost stern, produced for all its intimacy no revulsion and broke into no inconsequence of tears" (James 525-526). Why note that an innocent father-daughter hug produces no revulsion, unless it is not an innocent father-daughter hug? Before Adam takes Maggie into his arms, Maggie feels that Adam is "a great and deep and high" man (James 525). Maggie insists, "Now...[Adam] was thinking of her as his daughter" and this suffices to "Purge their predicament of every meanness" (James 525). Adam and Maggie's supposed "transmuted union," sanctioned as appropriately filial by Adam's marriage to Charlotte, allows Maggie and Adam to "emerge" and "smile almost without pain" (James 525). Maggie says, "I believe in you [Adam] more than any one," and Adam questions, "Than any one at all?" (James 525). Responding to Adam's loaded question, Maggie "hesitated for all it might mean; but there was—oh a thousand times!—no doubt of it. 'Than any one at all.' She kept nothing back now, met his eyes over it, let him have the whole of it" (James 525). In describing Maggie and Adam's "august and almost stern" (James 526) embrace, James provokes the reader to believe that Maggie should believe in her husband "more than any one" (James

525). This whole scene would be more aligned with an embrace between a husband and wife than a father and a daughter.

Maggie usurps Charlotte's role as wife by engaging in a romantic embrace with Adam, and consequently, Maggie remembers supplanting Adam's role as husband by kissing Charlotte. Maggie does not shy away from the queer possibilities present in a same-sex kiss, even a chaste kiss on the cheek, as she considers

the effect...had been almost awkward—the promptitude of her separation from Charlotte, as if they had been discovered in some absurdity, on her becoming aware of spectators. The spectators on the other hand—that was the appearance—mightn't have supposed them, in the existing relation, addicted to mutual endearments; and yet, hesitating with a fine scruple between sympathy and hilarity, have felt that almost any spoken or laughed comment could be kept from sounding vulgar only by sounding beyond any permitted measure intelligent. They had evidently looked, the two young wives, like a pair of women 'making up' effusively, as women were supposed to do, especially when approved fools, after a broil. (James 527)

Maggie imagines that their audience views the couple as “‘making up’...after a broil,” but James selectively represents subjectivity, and we have no idea what the observers actually make of the odd scene (Weinstein 245). The homoerotic tenor of the “almost awkward...promptitude of her separation from Charlotte, as if they had been discovered in some absurdity” is inescapable (James 527). I think Weinstein is wrong to read the embrace as a mere “Judas kiss” (252). Weinstein recognizes that “Maggie's concealed plotting makes her join Charlotte as a

candidate for” the role of Judas, but he insists the kiss is no more than an instance of witnessed “conscious perjury” (252).

I want to juxtapose Maggie’s kiss with Charlotte and Charlotte’s first embrace with Amerigo after Maggie’s marriage. After monitoring Maggie’s whereabouts all day, Charlotte surprises Amerigo at Portland Place. The build-up to Charlotte and Amerigo’s kiss tellingly begins with Charlotte’s insistence, “‘I can’t put myself into Maggie’s skin—I can’t, as I say. It’s not my fit—I shouldn’t be able, as I see it, to breathe in it. But I can feel that I’d do anything to shield it from a bruise. Tender as I am for her too,’ she went on, ‘I think I’m still more so for my husband. He’s in truth of a sweet simplicity—!’” (James 254). In response, “The prince turned over a while the sweet simplicity of Mr. Verver. ‘Well, I don’t know that I can choose. At night all cats are grey. I only see how...we ought to stand toward them—and how...we do. It represents for us a conscious care—’” (James 254). Charlotte rejoins, “‘Of every hour, literally...And for which we must trust each other’” (James 254). Amerigo agrees, “‘Oh as we trust the saints in glory. Fortunately...we can.’ With which, as for the full assurance and the pledge it involved, each hand instinctively found the other. ‘It’s all too wonderful.’ Firmly and gravely she kept his hand. ‘It’s too beautiful’” (James 254)

And so for a minute they stood together as strongly held and as closely confronted as any hour of their easier past even had seen them. They were silent at first, only facing and faced, only grasping and grasped, only meeting and met. ‘It’s sacred,’ he said at last. ‘It’s sacred,’ she breathed back to him. They vowed it, gave it out and took it in, drawn, by their intensity, more closely together. Then of a sudden, through this tightened circle, as at the issue of a narrow strait into the sea beyond, everything broke up, broke down, gave

way, melted and mingled. Their lips sought their lips, their pressure their response and their response their pressure; with a violence that had sighed itself the next moment to the longest and deepest stillnesses they passionately sealed their pledge. (James 254-255)

Thinking back to the passage that describes Maggie's kiss with Charlotte, we notice that both couples are sealing a "pledge" or "vow" with a kiss (James 255). Deceit is central to Charlotte's kiss with Maggie. As a bit of dramatic irony, the reader knows full well that Charlotte cannot trust Maggie's promise. Charlotte's kiss with Amerigo is, indeed, "all too wonderful" (James 254). As Charlotte's eventual expulsion to American City demonstrates, Charlotte cannot trust Amerigo's promise either. The language of Charlotte and Amerigo's embrace, "only facing and faced, only grasping and grasped, only meeting and met," emphasizes the same sort of oppositional relationships as Maggie and Charlotte's kiss in which Maggie and Charlotte are positioned as: subject or object, victim or victimizer, and deceiver or deceived" (James 254). One might argue that the kiss between Amerigo and Charlotte (though we suspect they seal their pledge with more than a kiss) possesses a sexual quality that the kiss Maggie and Charlotte share lacks. While I would agree that the embrace between Amerigo and Charlotte is as sexually charged as the "match burning in a crocus" scene in *Mrs. Dalloway*, I think it is wrong to devalue the erotics of Maggie and Charlotte's kiss (31). Cloaked in the fantasy of expelling Charlotte into "some darkness of space that [will]...harass her with care," so that she and Amerigo can be "close together," Maggie is able to invite the kiss with Charlotte (James 508). Maggie "made a point even...of not turning away. Her grip of her shawl had loosened—she had let it fall behind her; but she stood there for anything more" (James 508). Maggie self-deceives

so that she is able to be open and vulnerable to Charlotte's request for a kiss, and "The heart of the princess swell[s] accordingly" (James 508).

The idea of being perceived to be "making up" touches a much deeper chord in the relationship between the subject and the mediator (James 527). As Stevens articulates, Maggie needs to banish Charlotte in order to have a healthy relationship with her husband. Maggie takes evident pleasure in her relatively sadistic fantasies about ejecting Charlotte from her social relationships, as casting Charlotte into the "darkness of space" suggests (James 508). A more richly sadistic example of Maggie's fantasies begins, "Charlotte hung behind with emphasized attention; she stopped when her husband stopped...the likeness of their connexion wouldn't have been wrongly figured if he had been thought of as holding in one of his pocketed hands the end of a long silken halter looped round her beautiful neck. He didn't twitch it, yet it was there; he didn't drag her, but she came" (James 535). Maggie flushes "a little at the receipt of" of Adam's "irresistible" "betrayals," his "two or three minute facial intimations which his wife's presence didn't prevent his addressing his daughter" (James 535). Adam's "facial intimations...amounted to a wordless smile," but "the smile was the soft shake of the twisted silken rope, and Maggie's translation of it, held in her breast till she got well away" (James 535). Maggie imagines overhearing Adam's explaining

'Yes, you see—I lead her now by the neck, I lead her to her doom, and she doesn't so much as know what it is, though she has a fear in her heart which, if you had the chances to apply to your ear there that I, as a husband, have, you would hear thump and thump and thump. She thinks it may be her doom, the awful place over there—awful for *her*; but she's afraid to ask, don't you see? just as she's afraid of not asking.' (James 535)

Maggie delights in the fantasy of her father dominating Charlotte. Maggie's greatest pleasure is in sharing a conspiratorial smile with her father while he leads Charlotte around by the neck. Maggie imagines a scenario in which she and her father are in intimate connection as subjects, while Charlotte is at her most objectified, no more than a dog to be walked.

For Maggie's relationship with Amerigo to flourish, Charlotte needs to be continually cast out and brought back into the fold. Maggie seems aware of this. Even as Adam and Charlotte prepare to depart for the United States, effectively taking Charlotte out of reach, as part of Maggie's design, Maggie encourages one last rendezvous between Amerigo and Charlotte. Fanny is befuddled by the "idea that they should again so intimately meet," but when questioned about what Amerigo and Charlotte will do with their last little bit of time together, Maggie responds, "that's their affair" (James 569).

The image of Charlotte caged and breaking free elevates this cyclical process, while simultaneously shaping Maggie's "fantasy of passivity" by elaborating a way that Maggie projects the passive role, however imperfectly, on Charlotte and experimentally practices sadism (Stevens 63). Maggie notes

even the conviction that Charlotte was but awaiting some chance really to test her trouble on her lover's wife left Maggie's sense open as to the sight of gilt wires and bruised wings, the spacious but suspended cage, the home of eternal unrest, of pacings, beatings, shakings, all so vain, into which the baffled consciousness helplessly resolved itself. The cage was the deluded condition, and Maggie, as having known delusion...understood the nature of cages. (James 493)

In Girardian terms, Maggie's shared personal knowledge of delusion and cages suggests a strong sense of identification with Charlotte. This sense of identification is erotically charged. Maggie is gratified as

she walked round Charlotte's [cage]—cautiously and in a very wide circle; and when inevitably they had to communicate she felt herself comparatively outside and on the breast of nature: she saw herself looking through bars. So it was that through bars, bars richly gilt but firmly though discreetly planted, Charlotte finally struck her as making a grim attempt; from which at first the Princess drew back as instinctively as if the door of the cage had suddenly been opened from within. (James 493)

Maggie seems so jarred by the opening of the cage and by Charlotte's own agency, in part because Maggie revels in her sense of superiority and domination from her perspective “comparatively outside” and her stance “on the breast of nature” (James 493). Maggie's attempts to re-cage Charlotte take center stage throughout the remainder of the novel; as Maggie notes, “the splendid shining supple creature was out of the cage, was at large; and the question now almost grotesquely rose of whether she mightn't by some art, just where she was and before she could go further, be hemmed in and secured” (James 500). Maggie's own liberation from her cage, however, attests to the potential for Charlotte to continue her trend of prison-breaks. It is this epistemic uncertainty, Charlotte as never fully fixed and the possibility of her escape never fully closed, which excites Maggie and motivates her campaign to preserve her marriage to Amerigo. Maggie, for her part, is stirred by her re-caging encounters with Charlotte. Maggie comes “on with her heart in her hands; she [comes] on with the definite prevision, throbbing like the tick of a watch, of a doom impossibly sharp and hard” (James 502). As I will argue in the

case of “quivering” in *Mrs. Dalloway*, we should read “throbbing” and “impossibly sharp and hard” as sexual signifiers.

To complete the image of Maggie as sadist, we must accept Charlotte as masochist. While Charlotte is the active agent we emphasized, I think her agency heightens rather than lessens her masochism. Charlotte perpetually seeks out situations that are perfectly designed to cause her intense pain. As Weinstein explains, “of the four protagonists in this novel, [Charlotte] is the most severely positioned. Charlotte enters the text sharply placed as the prince’s object of desire, her gender role as a woman who can make men desire her both accepted and displayed. Her strength is the obverse of her gender rigidity” (Weinstein 381). Weinstein cites J. A. Boone, who notes, “‘Charlotte’s victimization is inevitable, given her acceptance of societal definition of her options; all the roles she has occupied— ‘old maid,’ ‘adulteress,’ ‘wife’—are grounded in assumptions of female inferiority or capitulation’” (Weinstein 245). Weinstein concludes, “The jockeying for power—the subject/object differential—is the enabling dynamic of Jamesian plot structure. And Charlotte becomes its primary victim” (Weinstein 244).

Weinstein’s contention is no better illustrated than by the bridge game, which mainly serves “to frame Maggie’s strange encounter with Charlotte” (Weinstein 251). When “preparing for this encounter, Maggie insistently characterizes herself as the victim” (Weinstein 251). “Maggie came on with her heart in her hands” and “by the time Charlotte had, without a motion, without a word, simply let her approach and stand there, her head was already on the block, so that the consciousness that everything had gone blurred all perception of whether or no the axe had fallen” (James 502). The gruesome guillotine imagery continues as Maggie exaggerates, “Oh the ‘advantage,’ it was perfectly enough, in truth, with Mrs. Verver; for what was Maggie’s own

sense but that of having been thrown over on her back with her neck from the first half-broken and her helpless face staring up? That position only could account for the positive grimace of weakness and pain produced there by Charlotte's dignity" (James 502). I agree with Weinstein, "It is hard not to recast these roles (and hard not to speculate that James is inviting us to do so)" (252). Weinstein is right that "Maggie's humiliation is as exaggeratedly staged as Charlotte's pride. Charlotte is the trapped one, the 'creature...out of the cage' (James 500), who will be...recontained and made to serve" (Weinstein 252). Indeed, it is "Not Maggie but Charlotte who must remain there to...prove to the others the reality of their escape; when the time comes, she will be the scapegoat exiled to American City" (Weinstein 252). If Weinstein is right that it is "precisely in this scene" during the bridge game that Charlotte is captured once again by Maggie, then the kiss between Maggie and Charlotte is the culmination and reification of their object-subject role reversal. Weinstein says, "*The Golden Bowl*...registers dialogue...as a performative activity undertaken by two subjects who enter and exit from dissimilar positions" (253). Even if Maggie's initial victimization is feigned, she leaves her exchange and embrace with Charlotte with the upper hand.

The Girardian model supplements and corrects Weinstein's account. Weinstein believes the plot of *The Golden Bowl* is driven by a series of complex subject-object dynamics propelled by a "differential flow of power" (Weinstein 244). While Weinstein's perspective is often useful and illuminating, he fails to latch onto to the complexities of the textual relationships or the Girardian model. By positing Adam or Amerigo as the Girardian object, we expose the tension between Maggie and Charlotte as originating in Maggie's attempts and failures at mimesis (Weinstein 244). Maggie, so long treated as an object, desires as a subject to become like

Charlotte, whose desirability to men entails her own future suffering (Weinstein 244-245). So far this pattern of behavior is consistent with Weinstein's claim that "the narrative logic of *The Golden Bowl* can develop the subject in Maggie-as-object only by exploiting the object in Charlotte-as-subject," but Weinstein's reductive model begins to lose traction as the events of the novel progress (Weinstein 244). As Maggie becomes increasingly like Charlotte, as Maggie learns to manipulate her relationships in the social sphere, she no longer thinks she needs Charlotte as a model and is able to expel her, along with Adam, to American City. But banishing Charlotte is a poor idea, as the final scene demonstrates. Adam and Charlotte's departure is marked by anticlimax. As soon as "the carriage was out of sight," Maggie is left looking "a while only at the great grey space on which, as on the room still more, the shadow of dusk had fallen" (James 594). Amerigo attempts to assuage Maggie's fear that the risk of losing Adam (and Charlotte) would not be worth the reward of Amerigo and their "freedom to be together" (James 594). In an attempt to push Amerigo toward "a confession," Maggie asks, "'Isn't [Charlotte] too splendid...That's our help, you see'" (James 595). Amerigo

taking in...what [Maggie] so wonderfully gave...tried, too clearly, to please her— to meet her in her own way; but with the result only that, close to her, her face kept before him, his hands holding her shoulders, his whole act of enclosing her, he presently echoed: 'See? I see nothing but *you*.' And the truth of it had with this force after a moment so strangely lighted his eyes that as for pity and dread of them she buried her own in his breast. (James 595)

If a fulfilling marriage is attainable for Amerigo and Maggie without the presence of Adam and Charlotte, it is not readily discernable in this passage. Even once Maggie has done everything in

her power to emulate Charlotte's socially savvy ways and has sentenced Charlotte to a lifetime in American City, Amerigo still does not have eyes for Maggie alone. What is more, Maggie sees through Amerigo's lie and feels "pity and dread" for sending Charlotte and Adam away (James 595). In the end, Maggie cannot even look at Amerigo, a far cry from the times when she admired the sight of him "with hated rivals" (James 146). At the risk of being too trite, Maggie learns a "be careful what you wish for" lesson. Maggie has to sacrifice one object, Adam, to try to save her other object, Amerigo. While Charlotte may be the "primary victim" in this novel, neither Maggie nor Charlotte is able to retain both objects (Weinstein 244). In their parallel attempts at normative marriages, ones without adultery or the specter of father-daughter incest, they are both unfulfilled.

If Clarissa Dalloway is watching the "monster grubbing at the roots" (Woolf 12) of her life, then Maggie is "the night-watcher in a beast-haunted land who has no more means for a fire" (James 544-545). As I will argue, Clarissa's monster signifies her queer relationship to Doris Kilman. Maggie's beast carries similar homoerotic implications. The queer beast motif is pervasive in James's fiction. Look no farther than *The Beast in the Jungle*. The beast, in particular, is an image that speaks the Sedgwickian "unspeakable."

IV. Who's Afraid of Doris Kilman?

In this section, I will begin by establishing the relationship of Clarissa, Doris, and Elizabeth as triangular in the Girardian sense. Then I will draw on Kenneth Moon's reading of the Clarissa-Doris relationship to begin identifying spatiotemporal repetitions that mark a heightened connection between Clarissa and Doris. Next, I will distance myself from Moon's reading by arguing that the model of triangular desire maps onto the text in richer and more productive ways than Moon's reading of doubles. Finally, I will transition into a discussion of these repetitions as symptomatic of modernist attempts to give voice to Sedgwick's "unspeakable," however subliminally.

In the triangle I am highlighting, Clarissa is the desiring subject, Doris is the mediator, and Elizabeth is the object. The triangular emotions of anger and jealousy are especially potent. In a moment of clarity, Clarissa realizes,

it was not her [Doris Kilman] one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered into itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman; had become one of those spectres with which one battles in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants; for no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kilman! But not in this world. No. (12)

Clarissa's equation of her feelings for, and impressions of, Miss Kilman to "one of those spectres...with which one battles in the night...who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants" is erotically charged (12). My reading of the sexualized power dynamics in the relationship of Maggie and Charlotte in *The Golden Bowl*, militates for

making a parallel case for the relationship of the subject and the mediator in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Clarissa's quasi-admission of love for Miss Kilman follows on the heels of an analogy to blood-sucking nighttime domination. What could be more Girardian?

Clarissa's portrayal of Kilman darkens even more as Clarissa concedes

It rasped her, though, to have stirring about her this brutal monster! to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine; gave her physical pain, and made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! this hatred!" (12)

The illness Clarissa battles is unnamed, but it does not prevent critics from speculating. Kathryn Simpson, whose theorizing about *Mrs. Dalloway* we will return to, believes "Clarissa suffers an illness which symbolizes her resistance to heterosexual imperatives," because her "chronic heart condition...frees Clarissa from any sexual demands from her husband" (73). Simpson concludes, "Her weak heart suggests a lack of sufficient courage, passion or love to mount any overt challenge to the cultural structures which contain her" (74). Regardless of our agreement with Simpson, we may speculate that Clarissa's illness and her "hatred" are meaningfully intertwined (12). Clarissa's conflicting feelings for Kilman, a mixture of intense love and hatred, are tied to Clarissa's unique relationship to Richard and threaten to make all of Clarissa's "pleasure in...being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a

monster grubbing at the roots” (12). The possibility of embracing same-sex desire runs counter to Clarissa’s domestic values and would reveal Clarissa’s love for Richard and genteel society as “nothing but self love” (12). The “brutal monster” is no other than the Jamesian beast in the closet, queer sexuality writ large (12).

While the complex tensions between Clarissa and Doris are readily apparent, Elizabeth is also aware of the antipathy between Doris and her mother. Elizabeth thinks, “Miss Kilman and her mother hated each other. She could not bear to see them together” (122). Interestingly, the text clarifies, “but Miss Kilman did not hate Mrs. Dalloway” (Woolf 122). In triangular desire, it is not necessary that the mediator return the feelings of hatred or rivalry engendered by the subject.

Clarissa’s feelings culminate “suddenly, as she saw the Prime Minister go down the stairs, the gilt rim of the Sir Joshua picture of the little girl with a muff brought back Kilman with a rush; Kilman her enemy. That was satisfying; that was real. Ah, how she hated her—hot, hypocritical, corrupt; with all that power; Elizabeth’s seducer; the woman who had crept in to steal and defile (Richard would say, What nonsense!) She hated her: she loved her” (170). According to the *OED*, the slang usage of “muff” has been in use since 1699. The more sexually suggestive resonances of the word “muff” shape Clarissa’s abrupt association of the painting with Doris. I want to emphasize that the qualification “Richard would say, What nonsense!” sounds remarkably similar to Clarissa’s earlier thought, “only a phase, as Richard said, such as all girls go through” (11). Clarissa decides

better poor Grizzle than Miss Kilman; better distemper and tar and all the rest of it than sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book! Better anything, she was inclined

to say. But it might be only a phase, as Richard said, such as all girls go through. It might be falling in love. But why with Miss Kilman?...anyhow they were inseparable, and Elizabeth, her own daughter, went to Communion. (11)

It is telling that Clarissa frames Richard as dismissive of Clarissa's concerns that Doris is seducing their daughter. While it is unnecessary for our Girardian purposes that other characters outside of the triangle recognize or validate the existence of the triangular relation, it is significant that Richard is reluctant to acknowledge Clarissa's concerns. Richard erases the subliminal possibilities that Woolf has inscribed in her text. That Richard, stand-in for proper heterosexual culture, denies the queer undertones of the relationships around him supports the argument that *Mrs. Dalloway* speaks the Sedgwickian fundamental unspeakable.

The heavy religious overtones in this passage, which continue throughout the novel, are connected to the codification of female same-sex desire. "Religious ecstasy" (11) and ecstasy of other kinds are deeply interconnected. This claim is reinforced by Clarissa's diatribe against "love and religion" (123). That the alienated, conjecturally queer religious character is named "Kilman," very nearly "Kill Man," should alert the reader to the plausibility of the "religious ecstasy" claim (11). Doris likens the possibility of casting Clarissa out of the closet where she has "known neither sorrow or pleasure" to "religious victory" (122): "Turning her large gooseberry-colored eyes upon Clarissa, observing her small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion," Doris feels, "an overmastering desire to overcome [Clarissa]; to unmask her. If she could have felled her it would have eased her. But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make her feel her mastery. If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying" (122). This fantasy

of domination and humiliation, so much more acute than Clarissa's comparison to "dominators and tyrants" (12), is taken by Kilman to be "God's will" rather than her own (122).

If, on some level, Kilman would take pleasure in outing Clarissa, then Clarissa is intuitively aware of Doris's threat, and religious conversion carries connotations of the conversion of sexual and/or romantic identities. Thinking of "love and religion," Clarissa reflects, "Had she ever tried to convert someone herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves?" (123). It is unclear whether Clarissa is referencing Kilman's sexual or religious conversion of her daughter. We will take it to mean that love and religion amount to the same thing. Clarissa calmly muses while "watching out of the window the old lady opposite climbing upstairs"

Let her climb upstairs if she wanted to; let her stop; then let her, as Clarissa had often seen her, gain her bedroom, part her curtains, and disappear again into the background. Somehow one respected that—that old woman looking out of the window, quite unconscious that she was being watched. There was something solemn in it—but love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul. The odious Kilman would destroy it. Yet it was a sight that made her want to cry. Love destroyed too. Everything that was fine, everything that was true went. (123-124)

Clarissa equates the old woman living across the way with her own psyche. Clarissa does this productively at the climax of the novel, as I will demonstrate soon. Clarissa is certain that "love and religion," incarnated by Kilman, will "destroy...the privacy of the soul" (124). I take "the privacy of the soul" to allude to Clarissa's alienated, closeted life (124), while Moon disagrees. Moon sees Clarissa wondering, "Did she...gain the whole world but suffer 'the death

of the soul’—for which her ‘privacy of the soul’ is mere euphemism” (Moon 155). Kilman calls into question for Clarissa the stability of her existing relationships, with her husband and with her daughter. It is in this mindset that Clarissa judges, “Degrading passion!...thinking of Kilman and her Elizabeth walking to the Army and Navy stores” (124).

Doris’s “overmastering desire to overcome [Clarissa]” is reversed after her interaction with Clarissa ends (122). It is “Doris Kilman [that] had been overcome. She had...nearly burst into tears when Clarissa Dalloway had laughed at her. ‘It is the flesh, it is the flesh,’ she muttered...trying to subdue this turbulent and painful feeling as she walked down Victoria Street...At any rate she had got Elizabeth” (125-126). Doris cannot understand why she should “have to suffer when other women, like Clarissa Dalloway, escaped” (126). This sentiment drives the reading that Doris may take pleasure in outing Clarissa.

Moon astutely notes that like Kilman, Clarissa walks down Victoria Street, but fails to complicate the image of Victoria Street by explaining that Sally Seton is staying there when she attends Clarissa’s party (Woolf 186). Moon argues that while Clarissa and Kilman encounter “much the same scene” on their visits to Victoria Street, “the description associated with Kilman may be read as a sexually charged and threatening one” (Moon 150). Moon argues, “Carriages *assault*, vans are *brutal*...men in myriads *advance* eagerly and are *angular*; women *flaunt*; even buildings are seen in sexually suggestive shapes, as domes and spires” (Moon 150). Moon wants to use this close reading to support the claim that Doris Kilman “is Clarissa’s sexual alter ego,” a claim that lacks nuance (150). Moon appeals to a bit of genetic criticism to argue that Woolf ratcheted up the descriptors in a later draft. While Moon’s genetic work is unconvincing, he offers us resources to compare the “flaunting” Doris disapproves of to the “flaunting” Clarissa

associates with Sally Seton. Moon argues, “the rooks...are ‘flaunting up and down’” when Clarissa is “in her state of ‘excitement’ and ‘ecstasy’ over Sally,” but “when these tumescent feelings for Sally are not present...the rooks are simply ‘rising and falling’” (151). Because the rooks merely “caw” in the manuscript, Moon interprets “flaunting” as a deliberate and significant alteration (Moon 151).

Clarissa and Sally’s relationship, commonly addressed in queer readings of the novel, gives credence to my argument about the homoerotic tensions between Clarissa and Doris. Moon believes “we are to understand the Kilman-Elizabeth relationship as providing insight into the sexual natures of the earlier Clarissa-Sally one,” but I am arguing the opposite (Moon 151). It is helpful to contextualize the Clarissa-Doris dynamic by demonstrating Clarissa’s infatuation with Sally. Sally’s “charm was so overpowering,” Clarissa could remember “standing in her bedroom at the top of the house holding the hot-water can in her hands and saying aloud, ‘She is beneath this roof...She is beneath this roof’” (Woolf 34). Sally’s “charm” (Woolf 34) primarily consists of bicycling “round the parapet on the terrace” and smoking “cigars” (Woolf 33). Clarissa experiences “Othello’s feeling...all because she was coming down to dinner in a white frock to meet Sally Seton” (Woolf 34). Clarissa’s feelings for Sally culminate in

the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower, kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it—a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and

down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling. (Woolf 35)

As a grown woman with a husband and a daughter, “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” is still her singular, adolescent kiss with Sally Seton (Woolf 35). The implications for Clarissa and Doris are astounding.

There is another striking parallel between the language used to describe Clarissa and the language used to describe Doris. Above we noted that Clarissa’s monstrous vision of Doris “made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots” (12). Later we see “quiver” again as Elizabeth leaves Doris after tea, “Ah, but she must not go! this youth, that was so beautiful, this girl, whom she so genuinely loved! Her large hand opened and shut on the table... ‘Don’t quite forget me,’ said Doris Kilman; her voice quivered. Right away to the end of the field the dumb creature galloped in terror. The great hand opened and shut” (128-129). It would be remiss to gloss over the sexual register of the word “quiver.” While the *OED* offers the relatively chaste, “To shake, tremble, or vibrate with a slight rapid motion,” other internet sources are quick to jump to sexual arousal or climax. The suggestiveness of “quiver” is heightened further by the repetition of the image of Doris’s hand opening and shutting on the table, an image that, along with Doris’s detailed eating of éclairs and fixation on pink frosted donuts, feels graphically sexual. As Moon notes, the scene in which, “fingering the last two inches of a chocolate éclair... Miss Kilman opened her mouth, slightly projected her chin, and swallowed down the last inches of chocolate éclair, then wiped her fingers, and washed the tea round in her cup” (Woolf 128), is “grossly sexual” and “crude” (Moon 151). Doris goes so far as

to say, “Sometimes lately it had seemed to her that, except for Elizabeth, her food was all that she lived for” (126). These depictions of the movements of Doris’s hand are preceded by Doris’s appraisal of “Elizabeth, with her oriental bearing, her inscrutable mystery” (128). As Elizabeth sits “perfectly upright,” Doris thinks, “no, she did not want anything more. She looked for her gloves— her white gloves. They were under the table” (128). Doris connects her relationship to Elizabeth to her own virginally white gloves, provocatively under the table and out of reach. As Moon acknowledges, “Each woman has her ‘party’ and...these are in a way central in importance to their lives. Kilman’s tea acts as a parody of Clarissa’s party, reducing it in substance and dignity. Each follows departure from Clarissa’s house...and is preceded by a period of shopping. But what is more significant is that Kilman’s is...a grosser version of Clarissa’s. Kilman’s is simple satisfaction of appetite—for food, for power and possession, for crushed sexual urges” (Moon 153).

“Quiver” does not only have implications for Doris though. Early in the text the thought of Doris disturbing Clarissa’s nuclear upper-class existence makes all Clarissa’s “pleasure” “quiver” (12), and later in the text, just before the scene with the Sir Joshua picture, Clarissa quivers again (170). Clarissa describes the “intoxication of the moment, that dilation of the nerves of the heart itself till it seemed to quiver, steeped, upright” as she walks “down the room with [the Prime Minister], with Sally there with Peter there and Richard very pleased, with all those people rather inclined...to envy” (170). Despite the elation of the spectacle, Clarissa reflects, “after all it was what other people felt, that; for, though she loved it and felt it tingle and sting, still these semblances, these triumphs...had a hollowness; at arm’s length they were, not in the heart; and it might be that she was growing old but they satisfied her no longer as they used”

(170). In an instant, Clarissa moves from admitting that her parties are no longer sufficiently gratifying to thinking of Kilman and muff. Clarissa “saw the Prime Minister go down the stairs,” and “the gilt rim of the Sir Joshua picture of the little girl with the muff brought back Kilman with a rush” (170). This passage begins with a lesbian mermaid trope and ends with Clarissa’s famous declaration, “She hated her: she loved her” (170).

In “Queer Fish,” Simpson unpacks the mermaid as a “metaphor for lesbian sexuality and subjectivity” in the context of *Mrs. Dalloway* (78), saying, “The siren-mermaid figure is, then, an apt metaphor with which to embody, yet not explicitly name, those lesbian desires so ‘shocking’ and unfitting for women writers to express” (Simpson 58). The sea, “coded as feminine and maternal” (Simpson 56), becomes a space of pre-Oedipal freedom in which “exploration and fulfilment of unconventional, non-heterosexual desires and sexual drives, of erotic possibilities beyond those culturally prescribed” can be realized (Simpson 56-57). Referring to the borderlines of the land-sea, male-female, and human-animal binaries where the mermaid lives and flourishes (58), Simpson writes, “refusing the logic of either/or, of fixed boundaries between stable oppositions, these liminal spaces can be read as sites of queer resistance to heterocentric imperatives (57). Simpson explains, “the mermaid’s ‘femininity with a phallic tail’ queries and queers the gender pairings so fundamental to the operation of patriarchal heterosexuality and [the mermaid’s] hybridity thus marks a refusal of heterosexual imperatives” (58). Consider this as “Clarissa escort[s] her Prime Minister down the room, prancing, sparkling with the stateliness of her grey hair” (Woolf 169). Clarissa wears “ear-rings, and a silver-green mermaid’s dress” while “lolloping on the waves and braiding her tresses...with the most perfect ease and air of a creature floating in its element” (Woolf 169-70). This passage qualifies, “But age had brushed her; even

as a mermaid might behold in her glass the setting sun on some very clear evening over the waves. There was a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through now” (Woolf 170).

Lest we think “a mermaid escape beyond patriarchal ‘territories’ to the feminine or pre-Oedipal space of the sea” is a utopian possibility, Simpson clarifies that it “carries the risk of dissolution or death” (79). There is the pervasive risk “of being caught in the scripts of heterosexual male fantasies and/or being forced into a dangerous position on the margins of hetero-patriarchal culture where being perceived as monstrous and not fully human is always a danger” (78-79). Clarissa herself is a test-case. It is Peter Walsh, “a would-be male lover,” “who envisages Clarissa as a mermaid in his own fantasy of her” mending “the tear in her ‘silver-green mermaid’s dress’” (73), and it is Clarissa who equates “Kilman, the spinster/lesbian figure” (76), with the “monstrous and not fully human,” as I have elaborated above (79). On this issue Simpson writes, “Thinking of Doris Kilman, Clarissa’s excessive emotion similarly takes her beyond such binary logic as she feels both hate and love with equal intensity in a way which ruptures the oppositional structures of thought and disrupts the boundaries of classification of hetero-patriarchal culture” (77). Simpson goes on to complicate this picture by explaining that “such disruption is not an unproblematic strike against oppressive cultural structures because Clarissa’s anger is also physically painful to her. It reminds her constantly of her own hypocritical complicity in the violence of this homophobic world and also signals the self-hatred her sense of hypocrisy causes” (77-78). “Passing” (Simpson 60) as a way of negotiating “the margins” and “as a strategy for survival in a homophobic world is not wholly positive for...Clarissa...and is synonymous with the compromise and loss” (61). Clarissa’s loss is “the

sacrifice of the mermaid's voice in the silencing of any open expression of lesbian desires, which is the price necessary to gain acceptance into the heterosexual world" (61).

For preservation, and despite its consequences, "Clarissa enacts her border-crossing strategy for survival as she 'dives' and 'plunges' into her fantasies and memories" (Simpson 75). "Thirty years into her marriage, her...imagination reveal[s] her same-sex desire in images...of sea, waves, and the physical exhilaration of 'plunging' and 'diving.' However, Clarissa is unable to act fully on her desires for women and lives on the metaphorical borders of land and sea, moving between heterosexual security and the pleasures and dangers of her desire for women" (74). On Clarissa's walk, the London morning

is described as 'fresh as if issued to children on a beach' and this image of the land/sea border leads directly to crossing over into the past. She recalls a moment of literally stepping across a threshold as she 'plunges' out of the French windows at her family home at Bourton, into air which has a sensual wave-like quality, 'like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave.' Such sensuality accords with her plunge into another space/time, a liminal phase of awakening desire and expectation...when she is courted not only by Richard Dalloway and Peter Walsh, but also by Sally Seton. (75)

Like Simpson, Moon picks up on the way Clarissa "'dives' and 'plunges' into her fantasies and memories," but he extends the image further, connecting it to the motion of the skywriter's aircraft and the aforementioned rooks (Simpson 75). Clarissa returns to Bourton on the first page of the novel with "a lark" and "a plunge" (Woolf 3), and "the aircraft, too, larks and plunges: 'It roared straight up, curved in a loop, raced, sank, rose...it swept and fell'" (Moon 154). For Moon, "The aeroplane and Kilman are thus significantly juxtaposed," but it is quite

clear that juxtaposition is not the relationship the aeroplane and Kilman bear (154). The aeroplane spatiotemporally connects young Clarissa at Bourton, so open and in love with Sally, to present-day Clarissa, more closed-off and navigating her repulsion and attraction to Doris. As Moon notes, “the aeroplane’s smoke, issuing white, curling, twisting and wreathing, catches up Bourton; for there, too, we are told, was smoke, winding off the trees” (154). Because Clarissa carries her experiences with Kilman with her when she daydreams of Bourton, “The Bourton world” is “not secure; and the sound of the aircraft boring ‘ominously’ throws back to Clarissa’s premonition at Bourton that ‘something awful was about to happen’” (Moon 154-155). I like to think that the threat to Bourton Clarissa registers is the same threat to the “privacy of the soul” (Woolf 124) Clarissa perceives from Kilman and the “monster grubbing at the roots” (Woolf 12).

While Moon does not connect the repetitions of “quiver,” Moon does argue that Kilman’s chocolate éclair scene parallels Clarissa’s crocus scene, saying, “The éclair in the mouth is to the match in the crocus as Kilman is to Clarissa” (Moon 153). Clarissa addresses quivering on a fourth occasion, and most sexually, in response to women directly. In her embowered “attic room,” where she feels “she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet,” Clarissa observes, “She could see what she lacked...It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together. For *that* she could dimly perceive” (31). Clarissa goes on to articulate internalized homophobia: “She resented it, had a scruple picked up Heaven knows where, or, as she felt, sent by Nature...; yet she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly” (31). Clarissa’s insistence on the charm to which she yields being the charm “of a

woman, not a girl” sheds light on her Girardian relationship with her own daughter. Clarissa’s interior monologue hints that Clarissa’s being older than the women she is interested in is a component of her attraction to them (31). Clarissa acknowledges, “she did undoubtedly feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough,” a claim instantiated by Clarissa’s explicit description of what it entails to “feel what men felt” (31)

It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores. Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination, a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment. (31)

It is in this instance of quivering that Clarissa is closest to expressing Sedgwick’s theorization of queer time. Not only is Clarissa’s queer sexuality a way to resist the linear expectations and demands of adult heterosexual marriage through temporal cyclicity (Clarissa cites a “virginity preserved through childbirth”), but Clarissa’s experience is realized in a moment that resists its momentariness (Woolf 31). Kate Haffey makes a similar argument regarding Clarissa’s “exquisite moment” kissing Sally (Woolf 35). Citing Sedgwick, Haffey explains that a queer moment moves “‘contrary to the direction of the main current’ or linear progression of time and [has] a tendency to recur or repeat” (Haffey 143). Running contrary to the main current may be literalized to mean running contrary to “opinion, tradition or history” (Haffey 143). Clarissa’s kiss with Sally meets the criteria of both definitions. Clarissa and Sally’s

kiss creates an “erotic pause” that runs counter to the heterosexual time that marches a woman’s life towards “marriage and reproduction,” and their kiss continues to resurface in Clarissa’s psychic life (Haffey 137). All time in *Mrs. Dalloway* that meditates on the past is queer, because “we only know of the past in this novel through the present, so the past is not gone, not past” and therefore is always eddying (Haffey 141).

While many critics of *Mrs. Dalloway* refer to an “adolescent Clarissa” and an “adult Clarissa” (Haffey 138), Haffey argues that it is divisions like those between adolescent and adult that the “novel’s narrative structure is constantly working to undermine” (Haffey 140) by rendering the “past and present simultaneously in a single moment” (Haffey 141). Clarissa’s memory of her kiss with Sally deconstructs the boundaries of past and present time to acknowledge “the ways in which this moment returns again and again to affect Clarissa’s present” (Haffey 141). Though her kiss with Sally occurred over thirty years ago, through recollection Clarissa is able to experience those feelings authentically again and experience desire and pleasure across the temporal divide (Haffey 141).

Clarissa is also able to cross the temporal divide in other ways. Clarissa often describes herself as simultaneously old and young (Haffey 145). Haffey chooses an excellent example when she examines the scene in which Clarissa asks Peter, “Do you remember the lake” (Woolf 41)? Clarissa’s lips spasm as she pronounces “lake,” and suddenly she is “a child throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents with her life in her arms” (Woolf 41-42). After the memory passes, Clarissa looks “at Peter, her look, passing through all that time and emotion” (Woolf 42). Because the “adult and the child exist side by side in Clarissa’s psyche,” the reader garners the impression that in Clarissa’s

psyche there “exists not a continuous progression of selves, but a collection of seeming contradictory parts...that have existed across time” (Haffey 145).

This thinking about time is reflected in the party scene. Clarissa notices, “Sally and Peter had settled down together” and realizes, “They would discuss the past” (Woolf 177). Clarissa knows, “With the two of them (more even than with Richard) she shared her past; the garden; the trees; old Joseph Breitkopf singing Brahms without any voice; the drawing-room wallpaper; the smell of the mats. A part of this Sally must always be; Peter must always be. But she must leave them” (Woolf 177-8). How are we to interpret the cryptic “she must leave them” (Woolf 178)? It could be for the pragmatic reason that Clarissa needs to mingle at her party, but this line is imbued with so much weight; it feels so somber. Is Clarissa, like Peter, not content with cabbages (Woolf 188)? Is severing the connection to the aeroplane, to Bourton, to Sally, necessary for Clarissa to move on emotionally? Or is it that Clarissa is anticipating the arrival of the Bradshaws and the trial of Septimus’s suicide?

For all the interesting things the text does with time, it is the way time pauses when Clarissa goes into the room alone during her party that fascinates me the most. Clarissa thinks Septimus “had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old” (Woolf 180). That Clarissa cites Sally and Peter as reasons to return from “the little room where the Prime Minister had gone with Lady Bruton” disqualifies simple party etiquette as Clarissa’s motivation to “leave them,” Sally and Peter (Woolf 178). Clarissa chooses life over putting out the light with the old lady, chooses Peter and Sally over Septimus’s fate, which she feels “was her disaster—her disgrace...her

punishment”—“punishment” for passing as purely heterosexual or for not embracing life fully, I cannot say (Woolf 181). In short, I share Moon’s contention that the central struggle of the novel is defined by Clarissa’s attempts at homeostasis as she tries “to contain and accommodate...the fierce heats of living as well as the arctic annihilation of death. At one epicentrum of this struggle is Kilman, who lights up for us what is barely discernible directly, Clarissa’s sexual nature and dilemma” (Moon 155). Moon goes on to argue that Clarissa shares Septimus’s “profound anesthesia of the spirit which has worked to isolate Clarissa, too, from the deepest springs of life—where the song is ‘ee um fah um so/ foo swee too emm oo,’ a love song—and impelled her instead towards that uncommitting, unenduring, surface human relationship, the party” (Moon 155-156). This is where I take issue with Moon. He is wrong to belittle Clarissa’s parties. To say the party is “unenduring” is to fail to recognize the party as an embodiment of the queer moment. While parties may be about “surface human relationship[s]” for most of us, they certainly are not for Clarissa (Moon 156). What could be more meaningful than Clarissa’s tenuous relationship to Septimus, which is only realized posthumously at her party?

The textual association of Clarissa and Doris transcends into a marked quality of intersubjectivity between Clarissa and Doris. Clarissa thinks, “This a Christian—this woman! This woman had taken her daughter from her! She in touch with invisible presences! Heavy, ugly, commonplace, without kindness or grace, she knew the meaning of life” (122), and moments later, “the cruelest things in the world, she thought, seeing them clumsy, hot, domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous, dressed in a mackintosh coat, on the landing; love and religion” (123). Clarissa concludes, “Did religion solve that, or love?” (125). As Clarissa thinks, “Love,” the clock that strikes two minutes after

Big Ben carries the narrative focus across town to Kilman “standing still in the street for a moment to mutter, ‘It is the flesh’” (125). Kilman’s thinking of Clarissa goes on: “It was the flesh that she must control. Clarissa Dalloway had insulted her. That she expected. But she had not triumphed; she had not mastered the flesh. Ugly, clumsy, Clarissa Dalloway had laughed at her for being that; and had revived the fleshly desires, for she minded looking as she did next to Clarissa. Nor could she talk as she did. But why wish to resemble her?” (125). Kilman accurately echoes Clarissa’s private thoughts. Clarissa has only just called Kilman “ugly” (122) and “clumsy” (123). Doris’s introspection reveals anxiety about juxtaposing her own appearance with Clarissa’s. Doris, a short time ago, turned “her large gooseberry-colored eyes upon Clarissa, observing her small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion” (122) and Clarissa has countered thinking, “now that the body of Miss Kilman was not before her, it overwhelmed her— the idea” (123). This comparison turns heartbreaking as Kilman thinks of “the infliction of her unlovable body which people could not bear to see” (126).

Having established that both Clarissa and Doris are concerned with “fleshly desires,” for it is Clarissa who is “tingling all over” at the “detestable” parallel thoughts of “love and religion” and Doris and Elizabeth together “clumsy and hot” (123), let us turn to Doris’s question for herself, “Why wish to resemble [Clarissa]?” (125). This inquiry would give Girard pause. Typically, in internal mediation, the subject desires to resemble the mediator, not the other way around. It is this kind of reflexive relationship between Clarissa and Doris that Moon uses to justify his reading of Clarissa and Doris as doubles. It is my view that Girardian triangles, rather than Lacanian doubles, provide a more fruitful explication of the relational dynamics embedded in the text. Furthermore, Moon should agree with me. Moon makes a Girardian point in his

article and does not even realize it. Moon writes, “Earlier, of course, it was Clarissa herself who had seen these sentiments about Kilman as ‘nonsense.’ But presumably no longer, as she transfers the role of scoffer to Richard. This is perhaps some measure of the distance she has come during the day to a recognition of her Kilman component” (Moon 154). Above, I have addressed Clarissa’s frustration that Richard delegitimizes female same-sex relations, and the implications Richard’s positioning in the novel has for the transmission of the Sedgwickian fundamental unspeakable. Moon complicates this reading, but it is productive. That Clarissa has taken a stance of closer identification with Doris, her mediator, illustrates Girard’s theory of mimetic desire. As Clarissa increasingly desires to become like Kilman, to be with Kilman, Clarissa grows to take Kilman more seriously as an adversary and as a barrier to her possession of the object. A side effect of Clarissa’s intensity is the displacement of delegitimizing views onto Richard. By setting Richard in opposition to her aim of oneness with Doris, Clarissa successfully drives herself closer to Kilman.

The intersubjectivity mentioned above continues as Moon argues that Clarissa and Kilman respond with similar cries “to the ecstasy (for Clarissa) and agony (for Kilman) of their ‘love’” (Moon 151). Clarissa thinks, “if it were now to die ‘twere now to be most happy” (Woolf 34) and Kilman recognizes, “if she could make her hers absolutely and forever and then die; that was all she wanted” (Woolf 129). While Moon attributes the similarities in Clarissa and Doris’s consciousnesses to an alter ego relationship, we should read these correspondences as demonstrating Woolf’s claim, “I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters...The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment” (Woolf, *Diary 2*, 263). Woolf’s choice of “at the present moment” may reference the single day in June during which

the novel is set, but it also is consistent with the thinking expressed by Haffey and Sedgwick on queer temporalities (Woolf, *Diary 2*, 263).

V. Speaking the “Unspeakable”

Sedgwick introduces the “unspeakable” trope in the “Toward the Gothic: Terrorism and Homosocial Panic” chapter of her book, *Between Men* (1985). Sedgwick writes, “Sexuality between men had, throughout the Judeo-Christian tradition, been famous among those who knew about it at all precisely for having no name— ‘unspeakable,’ ‘unmentionable,’ ‘not to be named among Christian men’ are among the terms recorded by Lewis Compton” (94). Sedgwick elaborates, “Of course, its very namelessness, its secrecy, was a form of social control” (94). “In the Romantic period the Gothic unspeakable was a near-impenetrable shibboleth for a particular conjunction of class and male sexuality,” but through Oscar Wilde’s influence, voluntary or otherwise, “what had been a shibboleth became a byword” (95). When questioned about Lord Alfred Douglas’s line from “Two Loves,” “I am the Love that dare not speak its name” (Douglas 74) during his libel trial, Wilde responded

‘The Love that dare not speak its name’ in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art...and those two letters of mine, such as they are. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the ‘Love that dare not speak its name,’ and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it...That it should be so the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it. (*Transcript of Oscar Wilde*)

Thanks to Wilde, “what had been the style of homosexuality attributed to the aristocracy, and to some degree its accompanying style of homophobia, now washed through the middle classes, with...complicated political effects” (Sedgwick 95). By the first decades of [the 20th Century], the “comic, educative, and terrorizing potential that the Gothic novel and the ‘unspeakable’ had” is realized (Sedgwick 95).

It goes almost without saying that “the first decades of” the 20th Century were when James and Woolf were writing (Sedgwick 95). I am arguing that the spatiotemporal repetition of images, theatrical fantasies, cages, and embraces for James and parties, aeroplanes, and “quivering” for Woolf, are a way for these authors to voice the “unspeakable.” I believe Weinstein was more correct that he realized when he wrote of *The Golden Bowl*, “Its impenetrable aesthetic surface sustains with civility the traffic it is required to bear yet intimates at the same time the nearness of unspeakable things” (246).

A virulent objector to the view I have put forward in the last chapters would want to argue that James writes about female same-sex couplings more explicitly in his earlier work. Here, I am thinking of *The Bostonians*. Why would James be so cautious, in *The Golden Bowl*, as to codify “subliminal fantasies” in spatiotemporal repetitions (Moon 433)? My response is two-pronged. First, *The Bostonians* was published in 1886, almost a full decade prior to Wilde’s libel trial. Sedgwick reads Wilde’s libel trial as a pivotal point in the history of homosocial panic, powerful enough to change the risks an ostensibly queer writer would be willing to take. Second, if my argument is successful, James portrays more than same-sex desire in *The Golden Bowl*. The Girardian triangles involving Maggie and Charlotte treat adultery, father-daughter incest and queer (step)mother-daughter incest. Adultery aside, incest is still a contentious topic.

When organizing my thesis, I analyzed *The Golden Bowl* before *Mrs. Dalloway*, because the *Mrs. Dalloway* argument is more widely acknowledged than the argument I am making about *The Golden Bowl*. I hoped that by remaining true to the chronology of the novels, the reader would recognize the themes of *Mrs. Dalloway* as scaffolded by *The Golden Bowl*. Published almost exactly twenty years after *The Golden Bowl*, *Mrs. Dalloway* is able to more explicitly treat same-sex desire. Clarissa's feelings for Sally are overt. It is Clarissa's mediated desire for her adolescent daughter that is richly codified.

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